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THE LIFE AND LETTERS OF
JOHN LOCKE



EDITED BY
JAMES G. BURTON
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

1955



TO LEDA AND OTHER ODES

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TO MICHAEL FIELD

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TO LEDA

Wiseliest confirmed of river bathers, thou,
Most nobly wooed of any god loved queen,
That oft didst swimming, like a snow-white plough,
The swiftest crystal furrow, then didst lean,
A panting majesty, on willow arms
Which, yielding, cradled thee, while all thy charms
Lay, open-bloomed, beneath the eye of heaven ;
Thus lapped serene, through many a summer even,
Consenting to the silence, thou wast seen—

Not only of white swans and cygnets gray,
Dove-coloured cygnets, swans of arching pride
That passed thee in abstraction ; clouds of day
Sail azure as such birds o'er waters glide,
And clouds will no more pause near kings' fair homes,—
Though queens watch at the casements while their combs
Gleam indolently drawn through perfumed tresses—
Than those swans loitered ; tell me ! had thy guesses
Soared trembling towards Olympus, wonder-eyed ?

Frail though the empyrean, hadst thou sent
Some fond surmise ?
Or had conjecture, with mere swans content,
In fowler wise
Stolen on islet lone

Girt with its bullrush zone?
Watched some proud mother warm her nest,
Or strike her tardy eggs?
Watched the soft cygnets quaintly test
Freedom on doubtful legs?
Watched, by an odd bright notion madly caught,
Stout babies break from shells,
And, hooded under fragile domes, make sport,
Like bees from flower bells?

Not virtues, that the sweetest sins forego,
Envy thee sadly ; nay, thou dost not blanch
Their cheeks with base regret ; for they can glow
With joy, to watch thee, on rose-laurel branch,
Hang thy gold belt of weight to stoop pink blooms
And make them kiss themselves in water glooms ;
Thy royal robe against the trunk suspended,
Loose then thy locks and vests ; for, these descended,
Thy beauty all the joy of light assumes :

Thou being hence, here, with enquiring hops
The robin ventures, perks with knowing look
His shrewd small eye, still draweth nigh, still stops ;
Thy picture-broidered train might be a book,
And he a child enacting someone wise ;
Soon hither, too, the bright kingfisher flies ;

x

His glance demands how gemmy-gauds are fashioned ;
On thy return both vanished ;—then, impassioned,
Burst in the imperial swan with ardent eyes :

O beautiful white woman, that white bird,
Embraced ere long,
Made rapturous music and was nobly stirred
To wondrous song ;
Note surging through his throat
On modulated note,—
Sounds unsealing worlds of bliss,
Dream-hallowed, sunset-flushed,—
Sounds more melting than a kiss
Received on midnight hushed,—
Sounds that made thee know, Troy must be burned,
Helen be loved and blamed ;
Ay, distant, 'neath thy closed lids, were discerned
Those shriek-pulsed towers that flamed :

Yet never, never, if the pain waxed shrewd
(Though in a vaster pleasure wholly merged)
Would thy great lover let remorse intrude
Upon that bliss, that like an anguish surged
Beneath his ardour, as beneath the blast
Swoll'n ocean in tall waves runs high and fast ;
Oh, never had a pale regret permission

To slow interpret to thy soul each vision
That flashed like summer lightning, flashed and past !

Forbidden loves are sweet to human hearts,
And, would but spare Necessity consent,
They might ennoble ; sanction she imparts
Was ne'er to any other woman lent :
Thy heart alone felt shame dissolve away
In pleasure limpid as the dawn of day ;
Beauty, unhumbled by the cold next morning,
Rash impulse thou createdst brought adorning
And like a bridegroom wrapped thee from dismay :

Delicious down of pulsing throat and breast
Thine arms have known ;
Thy fanned heart all the power of wings confessed,
Wings that had flown
Where thy dazed thoughts ne'er dared ;
In bliss then thine, hath shared
Strength, that had churned the river white
Behind the mightiest swan ;
Strength, that was sudden like the light
That reddens day-break wan ;
Strength thou couldst no more question or forbid,
Than struggle of thine might check
When, round thy shoulders, through thy tresses, glid
That amorous god-like neck.

**SUGGESTED BY THE REPRESENTATION ON A GRECIAN
AMPHORA OF A WINGED AND ADOLESCENT EROS
SEEKING TO CATCH A RABBIT IN A SCARF**

Whirr! and the dread wings flap ;
Scamper! the rabbit flies
Down the branched lanes like a streak!
Eyes he but the prickly hoops,
In covert furze some tunnelled gap,
He hears those pinions flap
As they poise that trenchant beak ;
In his heart the venture dies,
And headlong on he flies,—
Bolts, and the buzzard stoops,
Swerves, and the buzzard swoops,
Checks, and those dark wings flap.

Swift in the liquid light,
Steering between the furze,
Down the rough and hummocked slopes,
Skirting briery clumps of fern,
Brown and red-brown and jetty bright,
With dire reserve of might
Tracking those panic hopes,
Forward the buzzard skirrs,
Intently threads the furze,
Veers with the rabbit's turn,

Dogs, and keeps close astern,
Cheered by that reckless flight.

Love, on like wings, in chase
Held a like timid harmless prey ;—
Young, in his teens, with beardless face,
His body lithe, direct and slant
And smooth as the glossy rich display
On arrowy buzzard's form ;—but Love,
Sailing the warren close above,
The white-tailed scurryer all apant
Sought not with talon or with beak
To strike, but in a scarf did seek
To trap his timid quarry ;
And after helter-skelter race,
In victory did close the chase,
And caught his panting quarry.

—Not as when plunged beak joys
Eyeless the rabbit bleeds,
While his quivering ends in death ;
When detaches here and there
The handsome bird a morsel choice ;
When a strange proud noise
Making, at times he heeds
The distance, where the breath
xiv.

Of August stirs the heath ;
Dreams, and is keen and fair,
And as that desert air
Seems staidly to rejoice :—

Love with soft silk doth blind
His prey, and thus transports
Far to hutch of white pine wood
Closed by latch of orichalch,
A hutch where he shall to his mind
Straw, oats, and parsley find
And gaze o'er templed courts
Round which doves coo and brood,
Where in their tender mood
White-handed Graces walk,
Pause, stroke his fur and talk
To him with voices kind.

Soul, thou art caught by Love
After such chase, such pangs ; so blind
With darkness round, beneath, above,
Transported to like quiet shrine ;
Which far more wondrous thou shalt find
Than freedom's rugged wilderness.
There thou may'st watch in dainty dress
Virtues and Graces that combine,

Not only with soft-sounding word,
But converse understood when heard,
To raise thee up to glory ;
And, if thou follow as they lead,
Their patience will ere long indeed
Have raised thee nigh to glory.

Taught are the wild and free,
The warren is their school ;
Hazard, fate, the hawk, mishap
Teach them, bringing home the truth ;
Death at their doors they daily see,
They learn or cease to be :
Such as do never nap
Grow old and strong and rule :
They dub who is caught a fool,
Age and forget their youth,
Hold, though with scanty proof,
Their life the best that may be.

Love, and they see thee too !
Flee from thee, crouch or hide !
Beauty, youth and power and joy,
Golden curls that please the winds,
Naked perfection, wings that outdo
In power the kite's, in hue
xvi.

The Halcyon's! Their minds
Are Fear's, not theirs—they hide
From eyes, in which to confide
Meaneth life shall be joy!
They see thee, half man, half boy,
Unbewitched they thy beauty view

Thy house they have never seen :
Its covered courts are paved with tiles,
The open ones with grass are green ;
While, indoor water's channell'd speech
The music-loving ear beguiles.
Psyche, thy bride, thy sisters three,
The Graces and that mother of thee,
Beauty divine,—these all and each,
With the seven kirtled Virtues, tell
(Holding the rapt soul in a spell)
Thy captives many a story
Of great example and great grace—
Of lovers, who all fear did face,
And died, but live in story.

A LAMENT FOR ORPHEUS

This is his head, O women ; see these lips
Still now for ever,—
Lips, that persistently were dumb so long,
And, pinched together,
Refused our supplication that sweet song,
Which, in days never to return, did charm
Gaunt oaks of stubborn growth, stooping to hearken ;
And pines, whose tall throngs earnest broodings darken,
Of their austere aloofness did disarm ;
While every savage dweller in the forest,
(Like moon-struck lovers when their pain is sorest)
Followed him gentle, followed him in tears ;
Lions with shaggy mane brushed past his knees ;
And leopards silent paced with spell-bound ears,
And eyes that could not from fond worship cease ;
With honey-loving tongue huge bears caressed
His white unsandalled feet,
Which trod those paths our childhood followed in,
Drawn on by reverence meet.
So well the aim of living he expressed,
His lute such escort everywhere could win.

O women, look ; I part these heavy curls,
To show ye those fair portals where our prayers
Clamoured in vain ; these blood-damped heavy curls,
xviii.

To show ye shell-like mouldings, where, fond girls,
Your love was foiled and fainted ;
Oh, with his soon-to-wither beauty, now
Be thoroughly acquainted
While yet Death opportunity allow !
Brief, brief, the stay of sweet looks after death !
See, see, how thickly
The blood drops from the severed neck beneath,
While cheeks, waned sickly,
Foretell a ghastness which we dare not face.
Fast closes in our fortune's narrow space ;
Yea, all our fortune rests with this pale mien,
Austere no longer,
Where sorrow fenced herself, and brooding teen
Than life's hope stronger :
As rock, ringed by fair flowers, harsh and stern,
Such marble grief dismayed our blushful leaguer
Who camped about his feet, frail, wistful, eager,
And, hearkening, mute like flowers, could discern
A sound of tears within his riven frame.

He inly wept and heeded not our woe ;
His heart was weeping :
Like shadows of swift birds that passed above,
Or thoughts expressed from under features sleeping,
His sighs across our smiling patience came,

Or, traversing our hearts, confused our lips ;
Meanwhile, from all and each youth's glory slips,
Unheeded melts, as from bloom's petalled head
Its diadem of dew ; or idly drips,
Spilled out from languid chalices of gold.
Was his heart cold ?

We never dreamed it : no, he loved the dead,
Preferred her to the living ; and was live
As is the ash-heap's treasured core of red,
Which waits all day the wood-cutter's return
Within his hut, and, when he fans, will burn
And make his cabin glow, his comfort thrive ;
So shall, life's day once closed, that long-mourned love
Find her lost comfort cheer the night below :
" Eurydice " we heard him sigh her name ;
It sought the soft vast dome of blue above
Dove-winged, but shadowed us with raven woe.

Then from our smouldering hearts leaped forth the flame ;
Who knows what far-off echoes heard our cries,
And mocked them round their lonesome upland glen,
Repeating yells of frenzy, thinned in tone,
From passive wall to passive wall of stone ?
Who knows what leisured eagles, through the skies,
In idle wonder, quit rock perches then ?—
O Zeus, that madest, hast thou seen thy work
xx.

Mar its own beauty, ignorantly, blindly,
Untaught, unwarned, unreasoned with, unkindly
Dowered with liberty? or dost thou shirk
All care and thy deed's outcome leave to fate?
Or is our weakness tortured by thy hate?—

As the wind takes the forest, passion took
Our arms and hair, and all our being shook :
Like ships that, at the flood-tide, from their ranks
A tempest launches off steep shingle banks,
Sails drenched and water-logged,
We heaved upon the swell of black emotion,
At mercy of a rude remorseless ocean.
Like swimmers, seaweed-clogged,
Then felt our beauty fail and overstrain ;
Our grace and our resistance were annulled :
Our souls like bind-weed bells, dragged with rain,
Swung to the blast,
The glory of white youth completely dulled,
Forever past.

This river seeks eternally the sea,
As youth unwitting to salt sorrow flows.—
Bright waves, whose keen pursuit of destiny
Draws all our bloodstained thoughts the way it goes,
Accept of what bereaves us, this fair head :
We overdrove our hopes and weep them dead.—

We murdered him, O women, and our guilt
Is, as the ravenous sea, insatiate ;
All our good will to come, all thoughts elate
Shall be as jars of honey vainly spilt,
To sweeten that salt main.

Down, down this stream, speed on, thou fair head, floating
Past iris beds and king-cups less worth noting
Than were our smiles ; retain
That cold indifferent aspect, those drooped lids
Where'er thou wendest ; whether Nereus bids
Thee welcome, o'er some jasper threshold borne ;
Or lank and shipwrecked sailors, under crags
Crouched round their drift-wood blaze, behold
Thy beauty up-turned in the surf forlorn ;
Or, thou (where, fishing over billows grey,
On pinion slow, some lonely seamew lags
Till the moon rise) athwart the wan ray rolled,
To feast on thee, her weary wings upfold ;—
Nay, rather, to brown-footed fisher maiden
Shall soft foam sweep up whispering, with thee laden,
And thy face meet with innocent tears at last.
Our part with thee is played and of the past ;
Nor is there rugged darkness deep in caves,
Wherein the life of youth-resembling waves
Is broken, half so cruel as the thought
That our hearts loathe the deed our hands have wrought.

xxii.

A LAMENT RE-ECHOED

That noble stag, the leader of the herd,
Lies pierced upon the heights :
Who, then, can say a word?—
Let dumb does cry, let frail fawns bleat, since night's
Un-eared, responseless silence wounds them not :
Have they conceived of *Pity* to improve their lot?

How are the mighty fallen? by what chance?
Where now is honour gone?
O tell it not in Gath! Publish it not
In streets of Askelon!
Lest daughters of the Philistine rejoice,
Lest they for gladness dance
(The daughters of uncircumcised men),
And give their triumph voice :
Who could bear comfort then?

O let there not on you be dew again,
Ye mountains of Gilboa. No ;
Never let there be rain
Upon your lofty fields, where yearly go
Tribes purified, and there a clamour raise
Around the sacrifice, undaunted praise
That need not stint to shout :—it shall be so
No more ; for there
The mighty left their shields—for there, alas,

The shield of Saul was vilely cast away,
As though he ne'er
Had been with oil anointed :—nay,
Let spring there no more grass ;
Suffer not there to fall
By night the dew, nor any rain by day ;
There let no flocks or shepherds henceforth stray :
But be they barren all,
Thy tops, Gilboa, mournful and not gay :—
Who shall praise beauty now, since this has come to pass ?

Never the bow of Jonathan grew slack,
Never the sword of Saul was carried back
Save crimsoned with the blood of foes left dead,
Save on the flesh of warriors fully fed :
Yet, in one day, both son and father perished !—
Saul was, of Jonathan, beloved and cherished ;
Division had no portion in their lives
And found none in their death : less honour strives,
Less honour : both were lovely, both are dead.

Oh pleasant in their lives, lovely were they !
More rapid were they than grown eagles—yea,
Stronger were they than lions !—Maidens all,
Daughters of Israël, weep ye for Saul !
For he it was who clothed you, from of old,
xxiv.

In scarlet with other delights.
Had your apparel ornaments of gold?
They were won from armed Canaanites.—
Lament ye, weep, and wail;
What sweet word addeth comfort to a tale
Which speechlessly tears can tell:
Though the shedding of tears it is well,
Yet, O ye maidens, let it not be all;
Sing with your loftiest passion songs for Saul.

How have the mighty fallen!—At what place
Did they from out the battle drop? Tell me,
Doth Jonathan lie pierced upon the hills?
Come, lead me thither, I would see his face,
E'en add one other evil to my ills.—

Ah! this indeed is he!

I am distressed for thy sake, O my brother;
Thou, Jonathan, hast more than any other
Been pleasant unto me:
What is left to *me* then?
Wonderful love was thine,
Passing that of women even,
And all that love was mine.
Who loving after this shall deem he doeth well?

Who knoweth who rejoiced when my love stricken fell ?

**How are the mighty fallen ! How are they broken,
Those swords of the battle !—Rend we for a token
Our garments, cast dust on each head for a sign
That they are dead, that even those have perished
Whom most our hearts had cherished.—**

Ah God, whose god seems strongest to the Philistine ?

ON DEATH

Why question what my thoughts of death may be?
Behold 'tis Autumn—in yon poplar mass,
Whose green ripples to silver breezily,
Dangle pale yellow leaves like lemons large ;
And lo! beyond there! what has come to pass?
Suave haze and sunshine from its utmost marge
Have taken London to their mighty keeping,
Which, self-forgetful, smiles in glory sleeping :
And here hath she flown down whom children charge
“ Fly away home ”—and busily is creeping
A scurrying carnelian on my sleeve.—
O Lady-bird, begone ;
We men forebode ; stay, thou wilt ne'er believe,
Nor spoil glad hours whilst yet their sands run on.

Self-questioned ignorance yields no reply ;
And thus there grows an aching in our ear
Which stir of insect wings can magnify
And hear whole flights of angels oar their vans—
Nothing is silent when the heart will hear ;
All echoes, answers ; yet the thought is man's,
Not a new thought, brings not new knowledge, never
Breaks on the silence where his brain dwells ever,
Nor peoples that vast night the mind's eye scans,
Nor can prized beauties from what pains love sever.—

Wise, heartless, Lady Bird, hear thou, thy home
Is burnt, thy children flown ;
Yet be not less industrious to roam
The infant's hand, who makes such harsh things known.

When to the mightiest man death did draw near,
He shut himself within his bathing hall
And lent to his great admiral his ear ;
Who told of voyage on the Indian main,
The first by Grecian captains dared—that all
The glamour of unconquered seas might reign
Over the greatest conqueror's spirit failing.
By the bath-side, he, picturing them sailing,
Was as he had been in his youth again,
Conversed of conquest nigh as when unailing,
And pleased his captains ; yet grew worse once more,
Soon in a deep trance sank ;
His anxious Macedonians at the door,
Then would not be gainsaid, but, rank by rank,

In single file, were ushered past his bed.
His Indian and Egyptian veterans
Passed mute, were satisfied he was not dead ;
Unarmed they passed and many a tear let fall ;
Man, he had won more than had erst been man's
Till each owned him the embodied soul of all :—

And lo! they saw him vanquished, helpless, dying ;
So childishly their hearts were in them crying.
He no more moved, nor for one friend did call,
Yet two days lay, as all had seen him lying ;
Then on the tenth day of his fever, on
The twenty-eighth of June,
Died ; and from what vast schemes the life was gone,
Which up and down far lands like wrecks lay strewn !

His end was beautiful, though from vile cause—
A surfeit at a feast—his fever came.
Alaric's grave likewise commands applause
Though he sacked Rome and Italy trod under :
His captives, by those careful of his fame,
Were forced to turn Calabrian torrent's thunder
And in the dry bed delve a sepulchre,
And house his trophies and his ashes there :
But when the stream, which their hard toil did sunder,
Resumed his haughty course, then all they were
Slaughtered in thousands on his rocky shores,
That what they knew might be
Kept by their lips, as by his thund'rous roar's
Blank bellow, secret to eternity.

“ The morning after Goethe's death I yearned
To look upon his well-known form once more.”

So writes that friend who to his house returned.
" Stretched on his back he seemed to sleep, while, fraught
With peace, profound security reigned o'er
His mien : that grand brow still might harbour thought !
By one white sheet the naked form was hidden :
Large lumps of ice lay round it ; then, unbidden,
His man the linen from the body caught,
And laid bare what since eighty years was hidden ;
I was astounded—so magnificent
The limbs, the breast's broad slant
Was arched and powerful, the arms and thighs unspent
And muscular, the feet were elegant !

Nowhere was any trace of fat, and none
Of leanness or decay ; a perfect man
In all his beauty lay before me ; one
Moment, enraptured at the sight, might I
Forget that blood therein no longer ran :
And on his breast my thoughtless hand might lie
Ere me to horror stillness could awaken ;
But then I turned away, by sobs rude-shaken,
And gave free course to tears." Ah, wrought so high,
We, our revered or cherished from us taken,
By eloquent grief's passion rapt, may deem
That beauty finds in death
Merest defeat ; yet sometimes tombs will seem
xxx.

To echo angel voices, hoard swung-censer's breath.

'Tis known how on her bridal morn one died ;
Greatly beloved, most beautiful and young,
She lay there ; on the white quilt in their pride
Flowers were strewn, fresh opened, scented, glowing !
Purple anemones together flung
With crimson pheasant-eyes ; one hand unknowing
Oppressed green mignonette ; the other fern
Embowered ; near, forget-me-nots did yearn
Neath poppies crushed ; like mimic sconces blowing,
Orange set her brow round with lamps to burn.
While, stricken, her poor bridegroom, hour by hour,
Tear-blind, stared at her face.
Yet calmed by beauty, awed by sovran power,
One could have thanked death, though one dared not praise.

Such scenes concern but us who linger here ;
What their own death was to themselves none knows.
Heard they our wailing, as the insect's ear
Lists to the children's chaunt, a mere vague sound,
While calmly she, since life within her glows,
Is on her present occupation bound ?
Though all death's dreaded pain and hoped-for glory
Be nursed of us as children hug a story,
E'en croon one o'er the beetle they have found,

(Fair lie old snows upon the mountains hoary)
Imagination must teach us to die,
Must age and death enhance
And give to both a value clear and high :—
Or fail and leave us to blank ignorance.

TO LOKI

Cease, thou art terrible! Cease, thou tireless god;
No purpose doth thy crude, brief laugh declare;
Thy beauty charms the less, for being odd;
Thy skin is bronzed, like red flame flaps thy hair:
Shalt thou attract the would-be-self-possessed?
Oh, thou art young forever, there it lies;
Bewilder me forever with thy mocking eyes!

Thrall me! what though thy laugh ring hollow? Stay
Those limbs from dancing! Hover lower,
From off those sulphurous rocks thy feet leave grey
In spots like aged lichen patches! Slower;
Mine eyes ache following thy yellow vest
Which crisps and curdles round hips, neck and shoulder
While, lightning-like, it streams from boulder to boulder!

—Leaps as, from desert snow,
That ice-plough cleaves beneath the spangled night,
When clearest wind doth blow,
Flash and fly up those brandished spears of light,—
They hopping twang or crack with zest,
While the white bear facing north,
The silken blue-fox stealing forth,
Blinking seal in furry vest,
And the thick muffled Laplander,
Gaze and wonder at the stir!

Is it happy warriors dancing,
Fire-light on their gay spears glancing?
Is it gods, or demon sprites,
Or shooting thoughts of summer nights,
Like pangs that torpid flesh contains,
Thrilling Winter's ice-locked brains?
No, for it is thee and thine,
Who plans of men and gods do plot to countermine.

Volcanic nature, passionless desire,
Divine mobility, intuitive
Touchstone of qualities,—enter, thou Fire,
Enter our life once more,—force us to live!
May I encounter thee in some long lane,
A gipsy with stained garments on thy back,
With toys and charms, and songs bedizening thy pack!

Let weeds with wicked smells, as fumitory,
Make smart the shattered ruin of thy hat;
And, volubly persistent with thy story,
Trap me with hints, and like a wary cat
Let me believe escape were not in vain;
Then make me feel, how fond man's thought to rest
When none but active thought fulfils the soul's behest;

And of that ship tell me
Which storms, which fogs, which calms, which bergs of ice,
xxxiv.

No danger of the sea,
Can wholly wreck ; that still its voyage plies,
Righted, after each mischance,
By an old but nimble crew,
Lovers of green, salt, and blue,
That have oft, with fiery glance,
Watched the ice-floe's closing jars,
And have steered by astral stars,
Known Newfoundland's milk-white gloom,
Mirage through hot hazes loom,
Noontide darked by clouds of birds
And large fishes utter words.
Garbs of many climes they wear,
Hoary unkempt beards and hair,
Wiry comrades proved of thine
Dauntless like thee, though old, they have like eyes that
shine.

Life is not vain, I know it ; I am thine,
O Loki, thine to teach or to betray ;
Thy treacheries are punishments condign :
Cheat me, and laugh ; be cruel the god's way ;
Get hungry lips with vivid truth-like lies,
Then grant them speech with lords and harlots grand ;
Whose hearts shall faint and leap like birds held in the
hand !

Than pity more sensitive to bridle thought !
No eyes, like thine, foresee the course of Change,
As, step by step, with Time, followed by nought,
She passes, and still is : endlessly strange,
Enamouring speech until with thee it vies,
Thou patronizest thieves who keep their bad lives jolly,
And wags who pilfer seers, in wisdom to deck folly.

Content thou dost abhor :
The gods were happy once, and joyed their fill ;
Those days on thee lay sore ;
Thou lovely Balder by their hands didst kill.
Beauty to win back from Death,
Sadly turned they then to toil,
Labourers in obdurate soil ;
But more freely came thy breath,
And more nimbly worked thy wit ;
Oftener then, thy travel kit
Donned, thou wentest singing forth,
East, or west, or south, or north ;
Every homestead knew thee then,
Humoured, railed upon, by men,
Mischievous Lob, or lanthorn Jack,
Fiend upon the grumbler's back,
Thou wast ours ; but we are thine
By halves at most, ha ha ! Thou art but half divine !
xxxvi.

FOR DARK DAYS

Ah, when a fair day finds me cold to it
Who should be friendlier far,
Or when the night seems too august, so lit
With tranquil star on star ;

They ban unworthy every thought of mine,
That once seemed symbols meant
To help my sense express my soul and shine
Equal to that event

Which any hour creation thrusts on man,
Who inattentive, weak,
Feels the vast spectacle surpass his will
Which would respond to it, and sometimes can
Find thoughts as grand, as beautiful, and fill
As though a voice did speak
Ocean, sky, cloud-land, valley, plain and hill ;

Then, then, abhorrent, wasted human life,
All life of beast and pest
Maintained by rapine, lust, and strife,
I hate and would arrest :

Stay thou to multiply thy cruel wealth ;
And cease thou to cajole,

Stealing from that young girl her thoughtless health,
Her joy and self-control ;

Thou tiger, leave defenceless herds alone ;
Thou shark, submit to law ;
'Tis your example circumscribes my thought.
Collusion with your ruthless greed has thrown
So strong a spell that now my mind is brought
To horror down from awe,
And all I find doth mock all I have sought.

Oh, it is nothing that a day is fair,
If life cannot be sweet !
If souls cannot be lovers, and if care
School not desire's feet !

If always generations generations breed,
And race give place to race
Sapped by inadequacy, doomed to bleed
And, dying, pine for grace !

Only if fact can answer reason's prayer
Both in one life and all,
And in resultant beauty souls be good ;
Only if towards that goal each day we fare,
And never stand below where we have stood
xxviii.



Answer I to your call,
Ye stars, or yours, ye flowers of field and wood.

Yet is all vain ? vain then this sad surmise ;
For still unknown our doom ;
Yet we have fancies, can enchant our eyes,
Paint bliss upon the gloom ;

We have some strength, though it be not enough
The vast whole to transform ;
It can spread lawns where yet the waste is rough,
Some blossom shield from storm ;

Our strength can make fair skies its harvest fields,
And glean from cloud and star ;
The grace of trees, the calm of distant hills
Garner, and add what every flower yields
To feed a beauty and a light that fills
Our eyes, when those eyes are
Glad to see other eyes forget life's ills.

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